

## Prologue

All she could hear was the sound of her feet pounding the ground as she ran. There were plenty of other noises, screams, people yelling, cries for help, horses neighing and babies crying, but all she was focused on was the sound her own feet hitting the dusty road.

It was supposed to be a happy day. She was bringing her beau and his father a surprise lunch. She had packed a basket full of meat and bread. She had tied her best bow in her hair and styled it the way her beau liked it. Her boyfriend lived just outside the village where he worked as an armor craftsman, learning the trade from his father. As she walked, smiling with girlish fantasies of romance, her pace quickened with excitement.

She had made it just over the bridge that led out of her village, when she heard the first screams. The startling noise made her spin around to see chaos in the village. She wasn't sure what was causing it, but something was wrong. Watching from the bridge, she could see people running in all directions. Panic started to well up inside of her. Forgetting her lunch date, she dropped the basket of food and began running toward the danger.

Her father was away hunting, along with most of men in the village. They had left two days ago in an effort to kill a dragon. Hunting and fishing was the main economy of the village, and the village's yearly fur fair was just weeks away. All the eligible hunters were away trying to get the biggest trophy possible. They were tracking a dragon, the most dangerous hunt anyone could imagine, but it was worth the risk. The price of just one dragon's claw could feed the entire village for a year. Dragon scales were used for armor, and dragon's teeth were something only the nobles could afford.

The village was vulnerable with the hunters gone. Anyone who knew how to wield a weapon was on the hunt. This meant her father was probably safe, but her sister and mother were busy working at home preparing their furs for the upcoming sale. She had no idea what she was going to do, or even what was happening, but she had to find her family. She ran as fast as she could back over the bridge. As she got closer to the entrance of the village the danger was becoming clear. Homes were on fire, men on horseback were riding around with torches and weapons yelling and pointing. The village was under attack by a small army.

Fear was welling up in her stomach and rising to her chest. She focused on something else to control the urge to run away and hide. As she ran towards the danger, it was the noise of her own feet hitting the ground that soothed her, but that steady, calming noise wasn't enough as she got closer to her home.

As she entered the main part of her village she could now see more of the invaders. She recognized how their clothes were adorned with decorations resembling the wolf. They were members of a small, but growing cult of naturalists that were taking a stand against things like hunting and trapping. They had come to the town once before in peace, and in smaller numbers preaching their beliefs that animals should not be killed for food or furs. The group

had adopted the wolf as their symbol, a common prey for the village since wolves provided beautiful pelts. They had been quickly run out of town. They were threatening the very livelihood of the people here. Hunting game was how these people fed their families.

The ground where the village was built was rocky and uneven. Giant trees that grew to the heavens were so big, roads were sometimes carved through them. This land was no good for farming. This land provided wild game for its people, and its people had become experts at harvesting it. The “wolf cult” people, as the townspeople referred to them, were not welcomed. Instead they were quickly dismissed and escorted out of town.

Now it seemed they had returned with a more forceful tactic. These peaceful animal lovers, so desperate to save the lives of every living creature, seemed to have no problem killing humans. As the girl continued to run through her village she saw women and children slain in the streets. She kept running. It was a horrible sight. She saw people she knew, lying lifeless in front of their homes. She expected to be struck down at any moment by some brute mounted atop a muscular horse, joining her townspeople in death. It didn't happen. The sound of her feet kept going. It was like she wasn't even controlling her legs anymore. They just kept running.

She was finally in sight of her home. It was ablaze. She focused as she approached. Her mom and sister were nowhere to be seen. They were not lying dead in front of their home like so many others she had seen. There was a chance they were still alive inside, but the small hut was largely engulfed in flames.

As she reached the door of her home the heat was intense. It was extremely difficult for her to even get close. The door had been shut and secured from the outside. Some monster had pounded a heavy metal spike into the door making it impossible to be opened from the inside.

There were no screams from the inside. No one was around. The invaders were paying no attention to her as she cried and screamed as the realization that her family was inside their home alive or dead, while it was burning to the ground. She turned and put her back against the hot door and slowly slid to the ground. The door was so hot it starting to burn her, but she didn't care. The pain felt good. She couldn't imagine the pain her mother and sister had endured. She assumed they were both dead by now. She could only see through tears, partly from the pain she was feeling and partly because of the smoke.

She looked off into the village and saw complete chaos. The wolf cult loading up furs onto carts from the inventory of the towns people. For a moment she wondered why. These people were against using or selling animal furs. Then she immediately stopped caring. She was going to die. Either her hut was going to fall down on her, or she would pass out from the smoke.

She noticed something through her tears. There was a new person on horseback entering the village. This horse was black and was walking slowly. It was truly hard for her to see. Was it a man on the horse or a monster? Whatever it was it stopped, looked at her and quickly and

dismounted. It began to walk towards her. She could only make out the image of his outline, which looked jagged and spiky.

Panic welled up again. Why was she scared she thought. She had just resigned herself to die and now she was scared for her wellbeing. Still sitting against the hot door, she now was using her heels to push herself back, as if she could somehow retreat. The door was too hot now and she pulled away. The pain was too much. The creature was only steps away. It walked like a man but she couldn't be sure.

Instinct took over. She felt a rush of adrenaline, then anger and ultimately rage. She raised her arms in defiance as if she was going to somehow push him away. Then something happened. She had no idea how but a blast of energy shot from her hands and hit the approaching figure in the chest. It knocked it a step back. It was unharmed but startled. It stopped. Now her eyes were closing involuntarily. The last thing she saw was the curious tilt of the creatures head.

She was temporally blind from smoke, tears and heat. She waited, shaking involuntarily to feel the imminent deathblow. Most likely a stabbing pain through her heart. She hoped her killer wasn't the type to remove her head. She had seen animals slaughtered all her life and knew that consciousness remained for a bit after a decapitation. The thought of what that must feel like always scared her. Instead she felt a human hands grabbing both of hers and pulling her to her feet. A calm deep voice told her that she was not in danger. The man led her to his giant warhorse and helped her climb on top. He was surprisingly gentle. He then climbed on himself and rode both of them away from the village and into the safety of the forest.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Trap**

(15 years after prologue)

Brother Lundverge was at it again. He was doing what he does best, hunting monsters with his small group of companions. This time, it happened to be skeletons, or as they were affectionately referred to as, "rattlers", since their armor always seem to be loosely attached and made a racket when they were on the move.

He was waiting inside an old Temple. His men were all in their positions. His trap was set. He had every reason to believe it would work. He thought it up, made the plans complete with diagrams and specific instruction. He was a good planner, but that wasn't where his confidence came from. He had thought long and hard, but then, as always, he consulted his main tactician, Thomas. Thomas was extremely intelligent and could see the cracks in any plan. He had picked Lundverge's plan apart like a freshly cooked chicken carcass, wrote out his notes and handed it back. As always, Thomas's comments were spot on. Now Lundverge knew his plan was as solid

as it could get, but he also knew that plans have a tendency to go awry no matter how good they are.

The truth is, Lundverge believed in his team, and his god. He always believed in good triumphing over evil. He believed that light could be found in the darkest places, and that even though he was just a man, he would always be able to find his way.

His faith was sometimes annoying to others. The thing that set him apart, was that he believed he was the answer to people's prayers. Not every prayer of course, and he doesn't believe he is the only answer to prayers, but he does believe he was sent by his god, to fight evil monsters, and inspire his men to do the same. He was sent to save good people from evil. It's as simple as that in his mind. His beliefs were sometimes mistaken as arrogance in his younger days. People scoffed at his willingness to rush into danger seemingly without fear, telling him he was heading for his death. He responded by sharply telling those people they were in more danger than him because of their lack of faith. The thing that astounded everyone was, he always returned. Sometimes he was hurt. Sometimes his efforts were not successful at first, but he always tried again and ultimately always helped people.

His reputation grew. Before long, stories were being told of Lundverge's triumphs and they were often exaggerated. Stories of his faith also spread. Sometimes he was mocked, other times his tales restored hope in people who had lost theirs. Before long people were not referring to him as Lundverge anymore, but simply The Believer.

Lundverge was amused at this at first. He thought it just a bit of "fairy tale" nonsense. After a while he realized that the name inspired faith in others and he decided that was a good thing. Now days he embraces the name and has bestowed similar names to his team mates that reflect their sensibilities. Thomas was easy. He has little faith in anything but logic. He is insanely smart, but rationalizes every miracle and phenomenon he witnesses away to some form of science. Therefore, the Believer has bestowed the name The Faithless onto Thomas.

A sudden noise stole Lundverge's attention. He was expecting his enemy at any moment. It was hopefully going to be one man, an easy victory, but if plans failed, the temple could be filled with rattlers at any moment. Rattlers always made a noisy entrance, even when they were trying to be quiet. This noise wasn't them, possibly a rat or some other pest. Lundverge was on a stakeout. His trap was set. He had provided bait to draw his prey into an abandoned temple. The temple was circular and surrounded by stone pillars. It had an altar in the center of the circle. This had been a sacrificing altar. Many a virgin was murdered here in the name of holy sacrifice as an offering to some false god. The temple was dimly lit with candles. There was an opening in the ceiling that allowed moonlight in and it had a damp, musty smell.

The bait was truly impressive. Lundverge had truly outdone himself this time. It was the one thing the rattlers leader couldn't resist, ultimate control without the fear of ever losing it. .

Alton Rio, a human sorcerer, and evil practitioner of dark magic was the head of the snake. He had total control over the skeleton horde. Lundverge had been wanting to get his hands on him ever since Alton raised the first decayed skeletal body to do his bidding over a decade ago. That first poor soul, pulled from its restful eternal slumber back into the world of the living, found itself in agonizing pain and now a slave to its creator. It's only relief from pain was temporary and only occurred when it created others like it. Each Skeletal slave possessed the power of resurrection and worked feverishly to raise the dead from their slumber to join the army. Alton held the ultimate power over any poor soul raised by either him or any member of his army.

The Grand Order, a righteous army composed of religious warrior monks, and the army Lundverge is a high-ranking member of, has fought Alton Rio's skeleton rattlers for years. The Order's army has won battles, but without getting to Alton himself, it was an unwinnable war. He could just begin raising more undead and start over time and time again.

The Believer is the card Alton hoped the Order would never play. The Believer and his team, known as God's Fire, had been busy fighting the Order's most crucial battles with monsters and other supernatural beings. Alton's rattlers had typically been able to remain just under that level of importance to garner the attention of God's Fire. Recently the Rattler Horde has finally been causing enough trouble for the Grand Order's Counsel of elders to finally assign God's Fire to the job of taking out the head of the snake, Alton Rio.

God's Fire had been busy on other assignments, but the Believer knew it would someday come to them getting this job, so he had been researching Alton's dark magic for years. The Believer was an expert on dark magic. Some say he knew enough to be a sorcerer himself if he would ever decide to touch the craft. It was of course against his beliefs, and the Believer took his beliefs very seriously. Lundverge knew how to destroy the army of rattlers. He was going to set them free, and turn them against their leader.

"This is taking too long," said a very distinguished and familiar voice from behind Lundverge.

Recognizing the familiar voice, Lundverge didn't even turn around. This voice belonged to his oldest ally and friend Nevets Stormwater, better known as The Judge.

"Why are you not hiding near the door like we discussed?" answered a slightly irritated Believer.

"We discussed? Questioned Judge. "You never discussed this plan with me. You only talked it over with Faithless. I guess years of being at your side doesn't count for much. I'm left out of these decisions remember? Thomas is your all-knowing man with a plan"

The Judge was a difficult person to deal with most of the time, but it was high tension times like these that it was the most frustrating for Believer. Believer sighed and changed the subject. "What if you're not there to bar the door when the rattlers come? Please just go to your post."

“I left Redeemer there and told him to bar the door at once if Alton enters,” retorted Judge.

Believer turned around and faced The Judge, “You left a blind man on watch, and you wonder why I don’t ask you about plans?”

Judge rolled his eyes and dramatically said, “He has his sight at the moment and I assure you nothing will stop him from that task.

Believer looked down at his armored feet for a moment, smiled, shook his head a little and then looked directly at Judge with his clear blue eyes. He then, while stroking his well kempt greying beard and in a soft but serious tone asked, “And what about after he completes his task and you are not there to give him a new one? You think it’s a good idea to leave him blind and helpless?”

Judge thought for a moment, turned on his heel and walked away while saying, “I’m sure he would be fine. He does quite well on his own if you haven’t noticed.”

The Judge was the first one to join up with the Believer. In the early days it was just the two of them, riding the countryside together trying to help with dangerous creatures or demonic possessions. The Judge, who also was raised in the monastery that the Believer came from, shared the same religious views, but was much stricter and unyielding in his beliefs. The Judge was not very likable, but was loyal to the Believer and a vicious warrior on any battlefield.

Believer turned his attention back at the altar. A huge red jewel was resting there, it might as well be the cheese waiting for a rat to get hungry enough to stick its neck out and take it.

The Jewel of Tribidon was a magical item that had come to acknowledgment in recent years. It was said to have been able to break the bonds of control from any curse or spell. Believer had been obsessed with it for half a decade. If this thing could destroy Alton’s control over his warriors it was a very important item. Every town God’s Fire visited he asked for clues of its whereabouts. He would consult village elders or wisemen for rumors. Often, he was downright reckless with the information he gave out about the jewel.

God’s Fire would often find itself in a town in need, help rid the town of it of its problem and go to the next job. It was common for the town to put on a celebration for its heroes to show gratitude. Ridding a town of a powerful demon or liberating a village from a goblin occupation tends to make people very grateful.

Judge hated these parties. He hated the gifts, the wine and the praise, but most of all, he hated that the Believer seemed to enjoy it. Believer always coaxed Judge into going for some reason. Often he would be embarrassed as he watched the Believer, a man he respected and a monk of the Great Order get tipsy from wine and start talking about all sorts of things that should not have been spoken of. One of the topics that always seemed to come up was the Jewel of Tribidon. He would tell people not only of its powers of freedom, but even worse, he would tell people of his plan to find the jewel and use it against Alton Rio’s skeleton army to

sever Alton's control. He even talked about the abandoned temple where it has been lost for many centuries. If he felt really comfortable with his companions on any given night, he would even talk about how destroying the Jewel could work in Alton's favor.

A drunken Believer would say, "When I find the temple I will use the Jewel to break Alton's spell and this horde of his will be free to do whatever they want to their master before God's fire puts every dead one of them back in their graves."

The Judge found it all disgraceful, and after he had had his fill of watching Lundverge defile himself the Judge would wonder back to camp and play chess with faithless, who was impossible to beat.

As Judge left Believer in the temple and returned to his position by the entrance of the temple, his partner, known as The Redeemer had not moved an inch from where he had left him, behind a crumbling monument outside the decaying temple. Redeemer was fixated on keeping watch. Standing next to Redeemer always made Judge feel small. Redeemer was a slab of a man with dark skin and long hair that was usually pulled back into a gob of braids.

"After all these years of following that man, I finally think he's lost it," said Judge in a low voice. "He's in there waiting for Alton to just waltz on in alone? What makes him think he will come alone? Alton Rio never ever comes alone. Alton usually doesn't come at all! He sends the rattlers. That's his..."

"Shh," Redeemer quickly raised his hand in a gesture to be quiet. He slowly turned his head towards Judge and said, "Someone is coming. They are alone."

The two men ducked down to hide themselves behind the rubble and watched a slender man with priest like robes and a lit torch heading towards the entrance of the temple. The man was having trouble opening the door.

Judge immediately started whispering his criticisms to Redeemer, who seemed not to be listening. "Is this Alton Rio? If it is, I expected someone smarter. He has to remove the bolt at the top of the door. Can't he see it? Oh my word its right in front of him." He kept chattering to an unresponsive Redeemer who had a telescopic focus on the robed man as he fumbled trying to gain access to the temple.

The Redeemer and the Judge were an interesting pair. They were mostly inseparable. Their story starts shortly after The Judge began riding with the Believer. The Redeemer was a prisoner of an evil witch who had used her witchcraft to change the Redeemer into her powerful enforcer. In his normal state, the Redeemer is a blind man. He says few words and is extremely docile, but thanks to the witch's powerful spells he can be transformed into a powerful brute. In this state his sight is restored and he possesses enhanced strength and durability.

When the Judge unknowingly found the imprisoned Redeemer, he had no idea of the power the blind man possessed. He only wanted to free him, and free him he did. The Judge went toe to toe with the evil witch and in the end, she was crushed by the Judge's war hammer. What the Judge did not know, is that somehow this created a magical bond between the two men. With the Redeemer now freed from the witch, the Judge somehow inherited the ability to bestow the Redeemer with temporary sight and enhanced strength. The Redeemer stayed with the Judge and they soon discovered that when the Judge gave the Redeemer a command using the Redeemer's real name, Somjay, it summoned the Redeemer's special gifts. The Redeemer, in this state is hyper focused on the task given to him, and when that task is accomplished he returns to his normal state. The Judge watches over the Redeemer, hoping that taking care of a kind blind man will help atone for the sins of his youth.

Inside the temple Believer was alerted by the noise Alton was making with his attempts at getting the door open. He smirked, becoming a bit excited and hid as small as he could make himself behind the pillar he was using for cover. He had positioned himself so that Alton would unknowingly walk right past him as he headed towards the Jewel.

Finally Believer heard the loud creaking noise of the door opening and the beginning of lonely footsteps coming down the corridor in his direction. The hallway wrapped around the circular chamber of the temple until it led to the main room where Believer was waiting.

The light from Alton's torch gave away his arrival. The robed man finally came into sight. Believer studied the man. Few had ever seen him. There were no rumors of him as there were about Believer, who was sometimes said to be seven feet tall with a sword just as big. Something was off. The Believer could not quite place it, the person was small but there are plenty of small men, it was the way this one moved. Alton had a youthful grace about his steps. It mattered not. His trap had worked and Alton walked right past Believer's hiding spot and was approaching the Jewel.

The Believer, walking lightly on his feet, fell in behind the small man who kept a steady pace heading to the altar. The man stopped a few steps away from the Jewel of Tribidon.

"Well Lundverge, we finally meet,"

Believer was surprised! Alton's voice was not at all what he had expected. Not that Believer had really had many expectations of the man's voice, but the most unexpected thing was that it wasn't a man's voice at all. It was instead the voice of a woman. She turned around to reveal that not only was she female, but a fairly young female. Believer placed her age to be somewhere in her late teens.

"Who are you?" asked Believer.

"My name is Altenria. I am a sorceress and the commander of a great undead army."

Believer narrowed his eyes. He was confused. She was beautiful and had an innocent look.



“Surprised? Expecting an older man were you? I will warn you. You shouldn’t be any less cautious simply because of my appearance.”

Believer calmly returned, “I have enough experience in life to not make that mistake. He smiled warmly and asked “You ever see a gopbop? Cute little buggers at first. Next thing you know your skin is melting off from their acid saliva.”

The girl was now the one who seemed surprised. “You’re not like I expected.”

“Well what did you expect, a giant who chews on iron and rips apart orcs with his bare hands?”

“I heard that story, but no. I expected you to be trying to kill me with that sword of yours by now.”

Lundverge paused for a moment and said “Killing people with my sword isn’t my favorite thing to do.”

The girl scoffed and said, “People like me fear that sword of yours!”

“My sword? Do you know what I call my sword?”

The girl rolled her eyes before she spoke. “Of course, everyone knows. You refer to it by its name, Faith. Many have suffered a violent death by a sword named so elegantly.”

Narrowing his eyes, He asked, “Would you like to know why I call it that?”

She answered quickly and sharply, “No, I wouldn’t.”

“I’ll tell you anyway. I have done horrible things with this weapon to living things. Things I’d like to forget. Things that haunt me. It’s a beautiful sword but it’s also a reminder of pain. I’ve seen the light leave the eyes of many creatures while I push this beautiful blade through their body. It’s a horrible feeling. Rib bones crack and organs squish and make horrible sounds and smells. The only way I can look in the mirror and not see a monster looking back at me is by my faith. Faith that I had done all I could. Faith that I helped others through the brutality of my actions. This sword, the very instrument I use to bring death, I named Faith. It helps remind me, that I am trying to do good things in this world. I am trying to protect those that cannot protect themselves. Without my sword I am unarmed and without my faith, my sword is useless. So without one, I don’t have the other.

“That’s how you justify your violent deeds?” she looked incredulous.

Believer tilted his head and smiled as he said, “Violence? You sound awfully opposed to violence for a girl who commands a deadly army of skeletons.”

“My father, a powerful sorcerer raised the undead army when I was a child to protect him and I.”

“Protect you from what?” Lundverge had a feeling that this girl was not stalling or trying to sell him a sob story to justify her actions. She was telling the truth, or at least what she believed to be the truth.

“Altenria looked Lundverge straight in the eyes and said, “To protect me from people like you! People who don’t understand magic using folk. Who think we are evil. My father was murdered for being different, and he made sure his army would stay behind to protect me now that he can’t. He transferred his controlling powers of the army onto me. No one can kill what’s already dead! All I want is to be left alone, but people won’t stop hunting us. We are the victims.”

“Your Army has over run towns. Pillaged villages. Killed children.”

“Lies!” Altenria screamed. She was getting emotional now and Lundverge was getting to the bottom of this story. “My father only wished to keep us safe. He knew we were targets. Targets from people like you!”

Lundverge was confused. He had seen the destruction caused by this army for years. He knew it was real, but he also believed the girl.

“Altenria, When was your father murdered? by who?”

“Three weeks ago, and I don’t know who it was!” She was on the verge of tears. This conversation was bringing emotions out of her the young girl she wasn’t able to control.

“Listen, Altenria all I can say is that I think your father was doing things you were not aware of. You are being pursued because this army has caused countless deaths. You need to lay down control of the rattlers and come clean. No one even knows who you are. They think your father is still alive and in control. You’re innocent. I can help you.”

She showed real resolve now and said, “This jewel can keep me protected forever. Not even the great Brother Lundverge, or whatever it is you call yourself can stop me.”

Lundverge pleaded, “I don’t think you know how this jewel works. It is a breaker of magical bonds. It sets beings under magical control free! This Jewel in your hands will set your army free to roam the world. It will create devastation for you and countless others as your rattlers will attack random victims throughout the kingdom.”

“You must think me a fool!” Altenria fired back. She knew Lundverge was lying. “You’re only telling half the story. You think my father didn’t teach me all he knew about the Jewel of Tribidon? He taught me sorcery since I was old enough to speak!”

“Altenria listen to me. There is an easier way. Let’s call your army down peacefully. I was expecting your father, not you. We can work this out. You have false information on the jewel.”

“Ha! How do you know? You’re no sorcerer.” The girl said with a scoff.

Lundverge paused, contemplated his next words as if he was going to cross a line he couldn't come back over, and said, "Because I am the one who put the false information out into the world. I've been working on it for years, setting a trap for your father."

In disbelief the girl asked, "What do mean? Are you going to tell me the Jewel does nothing? That it's just an ordinary stone?"

"No" Exclaimed Lundverge. "It's a very powerful magical artifact. The breaker of bonds. That part is true, but how you use it, that part I made up. For instance, you came here alone and I know why, because you believe that bringing your army too close to the jewel will free them. Am I right? You're afraid that your rattlers could turn on you?"

She looked at him sideways and said slowly, "That's what my father told me. Yes"

Lundverge felt he was gaining ground with her. "That's because I told every leader, his trusted people, and commoners that same lie over and over for years until it seemed like common knowledge. Gossip travels fast, and your father was well connected, albeit in the shadows. It was my way of luring your father here alone. I knew he would see the jewel as a threat to his control. I counted on him seeking to destroy it, as you now do. It worked, except you came instead of him. This would be much more difficult with ten thousand rattlers at your side, and I made sure that wouldn't happen by giving the false information that getting too close to this stone would set your rattlers free."

"You're trying to trick me!" she said without as much certainty as before.

"No, I was trying to trick your father. I'm telling you the truth." Lundverge was pleading now. "I cannot stop you from doing what you came here to do. Don't you see I wanted you to do it, or rather I wanted your father to do it?"

Altenria rallied confidence again. "You're right, you can't stop me. That's why you're trying to trick me. You can't stop a powerful sorceress like me from splitting that stone in two and taking away your chance of severing my control over the skeleton army!"

"How far away are they? How many did you bring? An hour's walk? A thousand? More? Your army will come for you as soon as you split that rock. That was my trap for your father. Trick him into coming alone so I can capture him, and thinking that splitting the rock is going to destroy the only chance someone has at severing his control over those rattlers. In fact, the opposite will happen, splitting that rock will not only sever the bond, but send your skeletons here to kill the person who held them enslaved. They will chase their former master until they destroy him, I mean you. Then my plan was to use your father, locked in this temple as bait. His army will come to destroy him. This place is structurally sound and has only one entrance, limiting the number of rattlers that can enter at one time. My men are close. We can systematically send the walkers back to their eternal rest. I assume the rest of your army is farther away and will arrive later seeking the death of their former master, but trickling in a few

at a time would make them vulnerable. We not only would have gotten your father in our custody, we would have eliminated the army so they could no longer hurt anyone.”

“I don’t care how few entrances this place has, you and a few others can’t fight off a thousand skeletons.” Altenria retorted.

“Apparently you haven’t seen the Judge and the Redeemer work.” Lundverge said with a grin.

“Hahaha! Altenria laughed. One big problem with your story. If you wanted my father to split that Jewel, then why are you trying to stop me from doing the same? You’re a liar!”

“Because I don’t want to put a scared girl in harm’s way!”

“Too late.”

With that, Altenria began chanting a spell. Her eyes glowed and a purple glow radiated around her. Lundverge ran towards her to stop her but with a stroke of her hand he was frozen in place. She continued casting her spell as Lundverge tried to break free. It was no use. Altenria’s power grew to a climax and then she clapped her hands out in front of her. The Jewel of Tribidon broke in two.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Survival**

